FIGHT THE RACIST LEGAL LYNCHING OF THE JENA 6!

Six black high school students are being legally lynched in the Confederate kangaroo courts of LaSalle Parish, Louisiana. One, Mychal Bell, has already been convicted by a racist jury. Stemming from a schoolyard fight last December, the five teenagers still awaiting trial are facing charges ranging from "aggravated battery" to attempted murder.

With a population close to 3,000, Jena has only about 350 black residents. They're mostly confined to "their" part of town — redlined into trailer parks and dilapidated housing alongside the upscale white houses and mansions. Racism is not new to Jena, but the story of the Six has ignited a powder keg.

It began at the high school, where a black student asked a school administrator if he could sit under the schoolyard tree at lunch — a privilege hitherto reserved "for whites only." The administrator said it didn't matter where the student sat. The morning after the student violated this racist taboo, students arrived at school to find three nooses — in school colors, no less — hanging from the tree. While the school pushed to have the white students responsible expelled, the school board overturned the expulsion, opting for in-school suspension. The superintendent called the nooses a "prank."

Black students then organized a massive multiracial rally under the tree to stand united against this vicious act of racist terror. The school called in the District Attorney who, at a student assembly, raised his pen and asked, "You see this pen? I can end your lives with a stroke of a pen."

In the following months, tensions increased in Jena. One of the Six was beaten upon trying to enter an all-white party. The racist thugs got off with a slap on the wrist by the police. Then, a racist pulled a shotgun on two black students at a convenience store. When the students wrestled the gun away from him and called the cops, the police came and arrested only the students — for "assaulting" their assailant and "stealing" his shotgun!

The last straw came two days later, when a racist student, Justin Barker, who had supported the hanging of the nooses, shouted "n-----s" at a group of black students. A fight erupted in which Barker sustained injuries, unfortunately superficial enough for him to appear smiling in church later that evening. After the fight, six black students were arrested and charged with second degree attempted murder and conspiracy to commit murder — despite the lenient treatment the white teens from the party received earlier. When asked if Barker looked like someone who had been subjected to "attempted murder" earlier that day, even his own congregation's leader said, "No" — he only had some bruises.

The racist DA was initially seeking the maximum charges possible against the students. Mychal Bell, the first one to be tried, had his attempted murder charged reduced to "aggravated battery," and was offered a plea bargain that he rejected on principle. Why admit to a lesser charge when it was still a lie? Due to massive public outcry and because minors cannot be charged with conspiracy, some of the Jena 6 have also had their charges reduced, but still face what amounts to more than life without parole if convicted.

To fight effectively for the Jena Six's freedom means recognizing that their plight is not an isolated incident particular to an "unreformed" South's corrupt judiciary. Fascist repression and racist terror in the U.S. — whether in New Orleans, Jena, LA, or NYC — is increasing everywhere. They are the other side of the rulers' coin of imperialist war abroad and genocidal mass slaughter on the alter of capitalist profit.

The ruling class must use these tools increasingly to maintain "order." The more cowed and brutalized we're kept, whether by racist thugs in Jena, the Klan in Blue in Brooklyn, or the Minutemen on the border or in New Jersey, the less we're able to respond effectively to their actions abroad. The bosses figure that if the working class won't learn to be passive and obedient, then they'll teach us the hard way, with any and all means at their disposal.

For the Jena Six, facing enormous sentences just for getting in a fight at school (or more accurately, for being black), this increasing repression means they may well be added to the massive number of black people trapped in the jaws of the corporate prison plantation. As the mother of one of the Six put it, "They want to keep institutionalized slavery alive and well."

The Jena 6 are heroes for boldly confronting the racists in their school head-on by any means necessary, not falling into the trap of pacifist "resistance," which relies solely on moral appeal to sway the consciences of their abusers. In the spirit of the Deacons for Defense, who began not far from Jena, they understood the need to protect themselves. Make no mistake: the bosses know what a dangerous example this heroism on the part of six black teenagers could set for victims of racist oppression everywhere. That's why they're doing everything in their power to jail them virtually for life!

Progressive Labor Party salutes the courageous struggle of the Jena 6, calls for solidarity with them, and urges multiracial unity to smash the capitalist system that uses racism to divide workers and extract its super-profits from our grinding misery. However, we must have no illusions. We must fight like hell for the Jena 6, but even if the charges are dropped, until all the bosses and their lackey DAs, killer cops, fascist judges, and racist goons are hanging high in nooses of our own, workers will have never have real justice. Unless we make the struggle for the Jena 6 part of the broader fight for workers' power worldwide, we can only expect the terror to increase. With communist revolution we can smash their machine of capitalist terror and oppression and build a world where all workers will be free from racism, exploitation and injustice! Join us! All out to defend the Jena 6!✪

ISSUED BY PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

Progressive Labor Party is a revolutionary communist party dedicated to eliminating capitalism with communist revolution as the only way to end imperialism, racism, sexism and class inequality.

For more information, see www.plp.org or 718.630.9440